

science fiction news

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Selectors: Kingsley Amis, John Carnell, Dr J. G. Porter

NEXT MONTH'S CHOICE **Twilight World**

by Poul Anderson

THIS novel has the distinctive power of the best sf: it creates a world and a future with their basis in an imaginable reality; it is a fiction which could one day become fact; it makes the future seem very near.

The time-setting for *Twilight World* is a little while after a third world war. In the United States the remnant of government undertakes a survey of the earth and discovers ruin, famine and barbarism everywhere. The few isolated traces of civilization which remain are continually threatened. Their worst danger comes from the increasing number of abnormal births; radiation has permeated every part of the world, and although it is not strong enough to destroy life directly, it is crippling the human race through mutation.

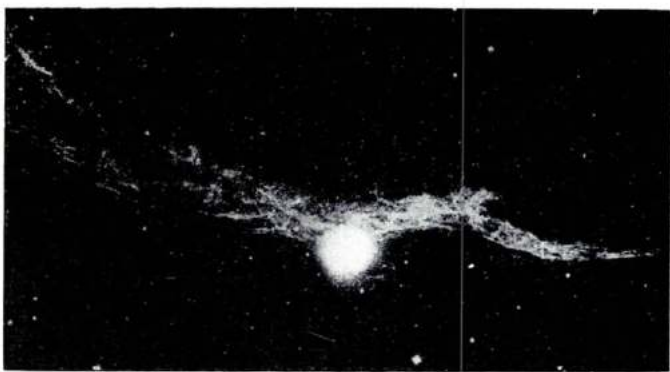
In the midst of the struggle to bring back a semblance of order, a child is born in America. He is called Alaric Wayne. As he grows up he seems unable to think or to learn; he hardly ever speaks; his only close companion is a dog. To all intents and purposes he is an idiot. Then, one day, the town where Alaric lives is attacked by a roving gang of bandits; in a matter of minutes the boy improvises a weapon, based on new and unknown scientific principles, and destroys the invaders. One chance in all the complexity of mutation has given the child a power far beyond any human norm. Other mutants begin to show rare abilities—peculiarly acute vision or hearing or tactile sense—and the government gathers them together, partly for its own safety and partly with the idea of developing a species of supermen from them, to turn back the tide of degeneration on earth.

At the same time other nations have been groping their way back to order, and so ideologies have grown up which cannot be reconciled. The whole world drifts towards a fourth war. The desperate search for some way to avert the total destruction of the human race takes Wayne and his unwilling fellow supermen as far as Mars, to a final battle with an enemy who has followed them from Earth. And even then the greatest enemy remains—man's own fear and weakness and ignorance.

Anderson is not a pessimist; his novel shows that he has confidence in the adaptability of the human race, in its power to develop into 'Homo Superior'. At the same time it is a startlingly credible picture of the destructiveness in man and of a world which might not be far off in time.

'Always the born story-teller, Poul Anderson has excelled himself in this gripping story, filled with plausible speculation, convincing scientific detail, fascinating characters and dramatic action.' *New Worlds Science Fiction*.

Gollancz 15s; SFBC 5s 9d



The filamentous nebula in the cygnus region of the Milky Way, separating two star fields of unequal density

SCIENCE NON-FICTION

A Special Note about the famous 'Larousse Encyclopedia of Astronomy'

READERS UNION is currently issuing this magnificent book at 37s and has suggested to us that it would be appropriate and very welcome as an Extra choice for members of SFBC; we are sure that you will agree. Instead of issuing it as an Optional choice in a particular month, we shall make it available at once—we stress the 'at once' because the stock is limited, so will you please order without delay from Letchworth (the full address is Science Fiction Book Club, Dunhams Lane, Letchworth, Herts.), giving your membership number or source of supply. We have quoted in full below a special review of *Astronomy* by Dr J. G. Porter, one of the SFBC selectors and formerly on the staff of the Greenwich Observatory. His description will give you a clear idea of a really superb book:

'The tremendous increase in popular interest in astronomy is one of the features of the post-war years, and is best demonstrated by the remarkable growth in the membership of the various astronomical societies. It all began, of course, with the black-out, when many town dwellers were able to see the stars and the planets for the first time in a really dark sky. But the interest has been maintained, and today the added stimulus of space travel has given a new point to this desire to know more about the universe. The recent success of the space probe, Mariner II, in